THE ATHANASIAN

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OPUS DEI: DOING GOD'S WORK?

John Kenneth Weiskittel

Opus Dei is Latin for "God's work" or "the work of God." It is a term that has enjoyed a long and rich life in the history of the Church. Most notably, Saint Benedict used the expression in his rule to describe the Divine Office which, he said, ought to be the essence of the monastery.

In recent years, however, it has been at the center of a tempest of controversy as the name of a lay group. Its leaders have worked to see that its public image remain, as Richard Ostling puts it in *Time* (June 11, 1984), "immensely attractive to traditionalist Catholics with a strong sense of the church's mission," but this image is being threatened by former Opus members who have come forward with a view that sharply contrasts the official version. These and other detractors have charged the group is elitist, quasi-masonic and "sinister, secretive and Orwellian," and they have called it "the Holy Mafia," "Octopus Dei" and a New Age cult. Opus Dei counters that it is being slandered in the way the Jesuits once were.

Since Opus Dei does have such a drawing power for traditionally-minded Catholics and, in part, because some of our readers have requested an expose regarding it, the present article is appearing. Perhaps even more reason for this study is the fact that the group, which enjoys the full support of John Paul II, has a growing number of members in positions of power and influence.

Super Catholic or Super Secret?

On October 2, 1928, the church bells rang in Madrid. There was nothing peculiar about that; it had been a regular occurrence for centuries. But for one Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, a hospital chaplain, it *was* different for, as they tolled, he was given an "instantaneous vision" of a new movement that he was divinely commissioned to found—Opus Dei. Of this alleged private revelation he later would say: "God led me by the hand. Quietly, little by little, until his (sic) castle was built."

The "castle" Father Escriva would construct is, to say the least, unique. Opus members are to perfect themselves by consecrating their secular vocations. Now, there is nothing unusual about this, in and of itself, as the Church has long had sodalities and third orders for such a purpose, but the Escriva plan presaged Vatican II by its overemphasis of the role of the laity. Father Kenneth Doyle calls this "its role as a leaven in secular society."

Some observers have suggested that the course taken by Opus reflects its Iberian genesis. Osling calls it "a reaction to the priest-dominated Spanish church." And Brian Crozier, in his biography *Franco,* writes: "A good follower of Monsenor Escriva...does not shelter behind the traditional humility of Christianity, or refer problems to his parish priest, as Spanish tradition encourages. On the contrary, he tackles problems and solves them himself. Opus Dei thus teaches an un-Spanish philosophy of success, offering the puritanical alternative of hard work in place of the passive acceptance of God's will..."

More than any of this, however, the question of secrecy has raised eyebrows on the motives of Opus. Listings of names for the 75,200-member group—74,000 laypeople and 1,200 priests in 80 countries—are not made public. Equally well-guarded are the Opus Dei constitution and personal instructions to followers. Then there is *Cronica,* the Opus journal, which is also unavailable to outsiders. Defenders of Father Escriva say that, if there are problems in the group today, they are not due to his original concept. (The same is sometimes said of Monsignor Pierre Theas and his creation, Pax Christi.) Yet those who hold such a position are at a loss to explain why this secrecy was part of the original concept. A most bizarre footnote to this came in 1940 in the United States when Opus members approached Catholics with the proposal that Freemasonry ought to be infiltrated by Catholics in order to undermine it. This, of course, is something the Catholic Church would never bless.

One reason the Masons have always drawn the wrath of Rome is because such secrecy tends to advance a neo-gnostic spiritual snobbery. Opus observers say the same trait in that group promotes the illusion that it creates "Super Catholics." Crozier writes that "it is often referred to as a new kind of Freemasonry, a club of the 'ins' that makes sure the 'outs' stay out." And *The Universe,* a British Conciliar "Catholic" weekly, makes a similar judgment: "It is almost as though the organization wishes to foster a quasi-masonic air of elitism, made more enticing to potential members by an air of mystery. That kind of air is unhealthy." This leads *The Universe* to add: "...it is frequently true that those who appear to be hiding something have something to hide." Just *what,* if anything, Opus Dei has to hide we shall now examine.

Inside the Cult

Doctor John Roche is a lecturer at Oxford University and a former member of Opus Dei. After breaking with it, he became one of Opus' fiercest critics, typifying it as "sinister, secretive and Orwellian." Most distressing to the professor is the cult-like grip it has on its followers' lives. Roche said: "Personal identity suffers a severe battering; some are reduced to shadows of their former selves, others become more severely disturbed."

Mind you, this was no mere isolated incident. Last fall in Germany another ex-member, Klaus Steigleder, wrote a book, *Opus Dei: An Inside View.* There, the 25-year-old theology student uncovers its deceptive recruiting practices. Ostling, in the *Time* piece, gives some insight into the work:

> At age 14, Steigleder was coaxed into a theater group at a Cologne youth club without knowing it was Opus-related and was gradually drawn into full commitment to the movement. Leaving becomes difficult for members, he says, because "their spirits are broken, and they have lost all touch with everyday life."

What kind of Catholicism is it, we may well ask, that forms front groups and that debases, rather than uplifts, its members? *Is it Catholicism at all?*

The Way, a collection of Father Escriva's teachings, gives us a clue as to the mentality behind such spiritually and psychologically harmful activities. "Where there is no mortification there is no virtue," he writes, and "Let us bless pain! Love pain! Glorify pain!" This translates to literal self-flagellation and other austerities for Opus members. The Roman Catholic Church has always been—and will always be—first and foremost the Church of the Cross. Self-abasement, the free relinquishing of licit honors and pleasures and the taking on of arduous penances, has a solid history in the Church, but a history that has had its excesses. Certain fanatical groups of self-flagellists have been condemned by the Vatican throughout the years. In Donald Attwater's *Catholic Dictionary* we read: "Austerity is not an end in itself, practiced for its own sake, but a means (necessary, but in very varying degrees) of advancement in virtue towards Christian perfection; austerity which does not tend to this end, or even retards it, is a vain and blameworthy observance." And Bishop John Vaughan, a noted British cleric at the turn of the century, asks, in his *The Minister of Christ,* the following question about sanctity:

> Does it consist of most severe penances and prolonged macerations—in wearing the hair shirt and taking the discipline, and sleeping on bare boards? Again, we reply: Impossible, for multitudes by reason of ill health or delicate or broken constitutions, or even by reason of the exceptionally arduous nature of their employments, are physically incapable of undertaking such austerities, which would further reduce their strength. They might even be doing wrong in attempting it. Yet, as we have said, sanctity is for all. (Bishop Vaughan answers his own question of what constitutes sanctity by quoting Father Faber: "Holiness consists simply of two things, two endeavors—the endeavor to know God's will and the endeavor to do it when we know it. Hence, holiness is well within the reach of even the weakest and humblest of us, and demands nothing more than a strong and persevering determination to acquire it at any cost." Can any of us deny that St. Therese of the Child Jesus was just as saintly in her "little way" as were many saints who were able to take upon themselves difficult acts of physical self-punishment?)

If the self-abasement of Opus Dei's membership is being used correctly, then it ought to show in them. Where there should be spiritual and mental stability abounding, we read, instead, of people whose "spirits are broken" and who are reduced to mere shadows of themselves." In fact, Doctor Roche has 1,500 such case histories of disenchanted Opus members that he intends to present to John Paul II (more about the "pope" and Opus Dei later). Could it be that these traditional penitential practices are being misused to "sensitize" and break down spiritual and psychological defenses in much the way Communists and New Age cults program people to be robots? If the Roche and Steigleder disclosures are any indication, and they may be but the tip of the iceberg, then it is en-

tirely possible.

Octopus Dei: The Power Behind the Throne

What makes Opus Dei seem additionally controversial is the fact that it is not satisfied to go its own way, but has always striven to recruit young men and women of the upper classes who are in professions that may be used as springboards to power and influence. In a 1979 memo the organization reported that "members around the world work, among other things, at 487 universities and schools, 694 newspapers or periodicals, 52 TV or radio stations, 38 publicity agencies and 12 film companies." (Ostling) And then there is the Opus connection with government and high finance, most notably in Spain, where the order has its own university, the University of Navarra, and controls the Popular Bank. This widespread reach into so many varied areas of importance has led critics to dub it "Octopus Dei."

In 1957, Opus Dei was formally granted admittance to the corridors of power when Generalissimo Francisco Franco named three of its members to cabinet posts. Since then, there has always been Opus representation in the Spanish government. (It can hardly be overstated that the organization gained much respectability in conservative circles due to this. After all, who could see Franco—who had wrested Spain from the hands of the Communists in 1939—*knowingly* giving positions of authority to men who were not equally committed to Christian values?)

Once ensconced, the Opus ministers took steps to broaden its power base. Crozier writes: "The charge that Opus Dei is a kind of Freemasonry...has some basis: Opus Dei men, once in office, tend to appoint other Opus Dei men." In theory, there is no Opus political or economic philosophy that its members are required to believe; all are free to think what they will. But in practice, its public policies have so often guided Spain towards dangerous waters that anti-Communist Catholics in that country have thrown up their hands in disgust and, in the words of one such patriot, exclaimed: "We are not fighting the Communist Party, we are fighting Opus Dei!"

What these disgruntled citizens are complaining about is a well-defined policy by Opus bureaucrats and opinion shapers to undermine the political stability of Spain both at home and abroad. Domestically, the policy has been to push for the relaxation of laws forbidding Communist activities, for wider social legislation, for unionization of workers and for amnesty for imprisoned anarchists and Communist subversives, many of whom were incarcerated for rioting. In the late 1960's, the situation became so aggravated that Generalissimo Franco closed down the Opus-operated daily, *Madrid,* for printing a blatantly pro-Communist line and, when such leftist editorializing continued, *Madrid's* publisher, Opus Dei member Rafael Calvo Serer, was forced to resign in 1971.

The Opus-directed foreign policy has been just as bad, as Spain became one of the first countries to implement Paul VI's *Ostopolitik,* the doctrine (continuing in the New Vatican under John Paul II) that says we must now acknowledge Communist slavemasters as the rightful rulers of their conquered lands. Henry Giniger, writing on Spanish cabinet appointments, in 1973, said of Gregorio Lopez Bravo (then outgoing Foreign Minister and another Opus figure): "He has been accused by rightists of going too fast in establishing relations with the Communist countries. He had reached accords with East Germany and China and was believed to be preparing others with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries." (*New York Times,* June 12, 1973) Giniger goes on to say that Lopez Rodo, the man chosen to replace Lopez Bravo, was also an Opus member.

Generalissimo Franco spent his life to preserve Catholic Spain from Communism and for the reestablishment of the Spanish monarchy. When he died in 1975, the monarchy was restored in the person of King Juan Carlos. At first, conservative Catholics celebrated this as a sign that the preservation of freedom would continue—but the cheering would stop abruptly. The reasons for this disenchantment are many but the most flagrant of them was reported by Martin Garcia in the November, 1977 issue of the Mexican publication, *Replica.* There, in an article entitled "Amnesty: Letters of Marque for Marxist Subversion," he wrote: "The Bourbon king has signed into Law a decree that provides amnesty for hundreds of Communist leaders, of various hierarchical levels, who had been jailed because of their subversive activities in labor; among students; among the clergy, and in the military." A sizable part of the non-Communist agitation for the release, says Garcia, was from Opus Dei and orchestrated by the ex-publisher, Calvo. While the present makeup of the Spanish government has a less noticeable number of Opus figures in the top spots, there are perhaps more in middle-level jobs, and King Juan Carlos' legalizing of the outlawed Socialist and Communist parties leaves little doubt that they are still the power behind the throne.

Evidence of a Plot

Could the chaos into which Opus Dei has thrown Spain be attributed simply to typical muddleheaded liberalism or is it possible that there is an organized conspiracy to use a pseudo Catholic group as a catalyst in a drive for a Red Spain? Before scoffing at the second alternative, skeptics should take note that it has been the charge of more than one sober observer.

Let us begin with this reflection of the anti-Communist Madrid lawyer, Blas Pinar, regarding the objectives of Bolsheviks against his country: "After the military defeat of the Communists by Franco in 1939, the Reds launched an ideological offensive. The first step was to support the Falange (a political party) and destroy the Carlismo (allies of Hugo Carlos, a claimant to the Spanish throne who rivaled Juan Carlos); then, second, to support Franco against the Falange; third, to support a liberal monarchy against Franco; and finally, to support a Marxist Republic against a liberal monarch." Geopolitically, the Iberian peninsula is valuable to Communists since it could serve as part of any pincers military invasion of Western Europe. One of King Juan Carlos' first acts was to overturn government institutions of Generalissimo Franco. Last year, Felipe Gonzalez (with the help of one million Communist votes) became the Socialist Prime Minister of Spain. That Spain is moving leftward cannot be denied.

A clearer indication of Opus Dei's part in this was revealed in the May, 1975 issue of the respected American journal, *Triumph,* in an investigative piece, "The Plot to Take Over Spain." Calvo, it was revealed, was publicly stating that he intended to topple the Franco government as part of "a triumvirate consisting of himself and the heads of Spain's illegal Socialist and Communist parties." *Triumph* was not going on hearsay but on a conversation one of its editors had with Calvo himself. The Opus leader said that, if Franco didn't hand over his reins of power willingly, a general strike led by the Communists would overthrow the government. King Juan Carlos was said by Calvo to be "in" on the plot. Since Generalissimo Franco died a few months later, and King Juan Carlos legally assumed power (he naively had been chosen by the generalissimo to take power), the revolt was no longer necessary.

Martin Garcia of *Replica* saw a historical parallel to this: "The perjured king (Garcia calls him this because he swore to defend Spain against her enemies) and his Opus Dei-Christian Democrat Cabinet are carrying out in Spain the same task that Rasputin and Marcelo Caetano carried out in Russia and in Portugal on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Portugal coup." (None of this is meant to reflect on many Opus members who believe they are truly doing God's work, but to illustrate the crypto-Communism espoused by its leaders.)

John Paul II and Opus Dei: The "Work" Continues

Doctor John Roche wants to talk to John Paul II about Opus. He feels the "pontiff" is mistaken about its aims. Roche says: "He may see Opus Dei as a counterpoise to the left in the church, but I don't think he has any idea of what is going on." If anyone *should* know "what is going on" with Opus Dei, John Paul II should, since its international headquarters are in Rome. In June he "ordained" 30 "priests" to serve exclusively within the group. Turning back to the Ostling article, we learn:

> John Paul's presence at Opus ordinations is only one of many signs of his approval. The Pope's first formal audience in 1984 was with Del Portillo...the prelate of Opus. John Paul's first pastoral visit this year was to an Opus center in Rome. Each Easter evening since his election, the Pope has relaxed by having Opus students drop by to sing songs and read their poems. He has encouraged Opus members to such special tasks as maintaining discreet contact with Catholics in Communist lands and opening a new evangelistic center in Protestant Sweden. (Like John Paul, Opus supports false ecumenism. It boasts 700,000 nonmember sympathizers called "cooperators" who, Ostling says, "need not be Catholics or even Christians, a radical concept when Escriva instituted it in 1950.")

David A. Yallop's *In God's Name* presents a similar scenario:

> Under Pope John Paul II, Opus Dei has flourished. If the present pope is not a member of Opus Dei, he is to its adherents everything they could wish a pope to be. One of his first acts after his election was to go to the tomb of the founder of Opus Dei and pray. Subsequently he has granted the sect the status of personal prelature, a significant step on the journey to Cardinal Cody land, where one becomes answerable only to God and Rome.

Ostling notes that the New Vatican, in 1981, "took the first steps toward the canonization of (Escriva),...who died in 1975." The "personal prelature" concept

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A Few Observations about The Athanasian...

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

With the appearance of this fortieth issue, five years of publication of *The Athanasian* will have been completed. Perhaps, then, a few observations regarding it would be appropriate.

From the very first issue a continuous effort has been exerted to make this newsletter a publication which would reflect well upon sound traditional Catholicism. Despite all of the confusion and turmoil and irrationality that have marked the traditional movement almost from its beginning, we have always endeavored to be simply Roman Catholic in the pages of *The Athanasian*. We have never allied ourselves with any of the alleged visionaries nor promoted their "apparitions" and "messages." Nor have we affiliated ourselves with any group or movement which has appeared on the scene to date claiming to have the solution to one or another crisis in the Church. Of the scores of articles that have been printed on a variety of subjects in this newsletter, all have dealt, directly or indirectly, with the Church and her doctrinal and moral teachings, including, of course, a number of articles describing and exposing organizations and conspiracies hostile to the Faith (Communism, Freemasonry, Pax Christi, New Age Movement, Opus Dei, etc.). Much space has understandably been devoted to the Conciliar Church, the principal enemy of traditional Catholicism.

In a word, *The Athanasian* has always and steadfastly endeavored to be a totally traditional, solidly Roman Catholic publication. As to where it stands on the vital issues of our day in which the Faith or the moral law of God is involved, no one reading its pages can have any reasonable doubt. Either a person is a Roman Catholic or he is not. There is no middle ground. As for those conservative "Catholics" who are, so they contend, fighting the enemy from within, whatever justification such a position may once have had is long since no longer defensible. Conservative members of the Conciliar Church are simply not Roman Catholics, however noble their intentions may be.

(If *The Athanasian* is, in fact, the very worthy and commendable publication so many of our subscribers believe it to be, a major reason for this is found in the writings of John K. Weiskittel. Thus far some 20 articles of his have appeared in this newsletter, all of them the result of much work on his part and many of them requiring considerable research. Several of those articles, incidentally, have dealt with subjects which are of vital importance in relation to the Church and which, to my knowledge, have not been treated, at least in any depth, by any other traditional or conservative publication of national circulation in this country—Pax Christi, New Age Movement, Opus Dei (in this issue), among others. Regrettably, such articles of Mr. Weiskittel, with the exception of one on Freemasonry, have not gotten the extent of reader response expected. In any case, I simply wish to take the opportunity here to express my gratitude to Mr. Weiskittel for his many excellent literary contributions to these pages and to assure him that his writings are genuinely appreciated by many.)

But, despite our best efforts to make our newsletter a worthy traditional Roman Catholic publication in every respect and despite the many encouraging and complimentary comments we receive concerning it, has *The Athanasian* actually made any real impact upon the American scene or upon the Conciliar Church? Not to my knowledge. And this, in my opinion, is due to the fact that the circulation of *The Athanasian* is nowhere near the size it must be to make it a publication to be reckoned with by the enemies of traditional Catholicism. We are presently advertising in four publications. What results we get remains to be seen. *The Athanasian* could become a really significant force in the defense and propagation of the Faith and in the exposure of its enemies. It could indeed—but not without a far greater circulation than it presently has. To attain that far greater circulation depends, in large part, upon the extent to which our subscribers will publicize and promote *The Athanasian* in one way or another.

With the next issue—that of January 15, 1985—*The Athanasian* will begin its sixth year of publication. As in the past, we will continue our policy of presenting, pure and unvarnished, the mind and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, with particular application of those teachings to the vital issues of our day. Most assuredly, we will not hedge or compromise on any subject. While it is not our intention to offend or to antagonize in the pages of this newsletter, the fear of this will not keep us from stating the truth whenever it is necessary to do so. We do not seek popularity if that requires compromise on matters of principle. As long as we are convinced that our stand on any issue is morally right and must be taken, then so be it. The Roman Catholic Church (traditional Catholicism) has the truth. As traditional Roman Catholics, we will always, please God, adhere unwaveringly to that truth in the pages of *The Athanasian*. †

Saint Nicholas

Jill Wiesner

Saint Nicholas. How many Americans think of him as anything more than "jolly old St. Nick," the secular symbol who grins in store windows and television commercials at Christmastime? How many American Catholics know anything about the real Nicholas? Yet this saint is a champion of the Faith who defended Holy Mother Church against heresy from within as well as pagan attacks from without. Sixteen-hundred years have passed since Nicholas was Bishop of Myra, a city of Lycia in Asia Minor. But though there are many years between our time and his, the enemies he faced and helped to defeat were very similar to those which the Church faces today.

Nicholas was born in the city of Patara, also in Asia Minor, at the end of the third century. The Greek historians of his life agree that he was a good and holy child, fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays from a very young age. His parents died soon after he reached manhood, leaving him with a sizable inheritance, which he decided to use for works of charity. He then made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and, soon after his return—having previously been ordained a priest—was named Bishop of Myra. We tend to think of Nicholas as being always very old, with a long-flowing white beard, but he was actually a very young man when he became Bishop of Myra.

His reign as Bishop began in the early fourth century, the final and most brutal period of persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. Diocletian, known for his particularly vicious treatment of Christians, was emperor. Nicholas, a courageous shepherd of his flock, who fearlessly preached the truths of the Faith, was arrested, thrown into prison in chains, and tortured.

In the year 313, the new emperor, Constantine, (whose mother, Saint Helena, was a Christian convert) ended the persecution of the Christians by issuing the Edict of Milan. Under the Edict, toleration of all religions was granted; the death penalty by crucifixion was prohibited, out of respect for Christ; and the bloody games of the arena forbidden. Christians were now allowed to receive legacies and were eligible for public office. And the prisoners, including the steadfast Bishop Nicholas, were released.

Nicholas returned to Myra but soon found it necessary to oppose a new enemy of the Faith, this one within the Church itself. In 318, Arius, a priest of Alexandria, began to preach a heresy denying the divinity of Jesus Christ. Having charge of one of the largest churches in the city, and being impressive in appearance and clever with words, Arius attracted large numbers of followers to his heretical views. Nicholas opposed Arianism so fiercely that, according to Saint Methodius, "the metropolis of Myra alone was untouched by the filth of the Arian heresy, which it firmly rejected as death-dealing poison." (Thurston and Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints,* Vol. IV, p. 504) Bishop Nicholas was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and actually gave Arius a slap in the face, an act for which he was disciplined by the other bishops at the Council.

Nicholas was just as vigorous in his opposition to paganism. He destroyed a number of temples, including the big temple of Artemis from which "the evil spirits fled howling before him." (ibid., p. 504)

Injustice also suffered defeat at the hand of Nicholas, who saved innocent men from unjust punishment on a number of occasions. Several men who had been condemned to death by the governor Eustathius were saved when Nicholas arrived at the scene of the execution, stayed the hand of the executioner, and rebuked Eustathius until the governor broke down and confessed that he had accepted a bribe to condemn them.

Present on that occasion were three imperial officers on their way to duty in Phrygia. These officers were later imprisoned themselves on false charges made against them by the prefect Ablavius and were sentenced to death by Constantine. Remembering Saint Nicholas' defense of the other innocent men, the officers prayed that God might aid them through Nicholas. The saint soon appeared in a dream to both Constantine and Ablavius and told them, with threats, to free the innocent officers. The emperor and the prefect compared dreams and questioned the officers who acknowledged that they had called upon the name of Nicholas for help. Constantine released the officers and sent them with a note to Nicholas, pleading with him not to threaten him any more. (ibid., p. 505)

A tireless warrior in defense of the flock, Saint Nicholas was also a devoted shepherd. Some of the best-loved anecdotes from his life show his kindness and solicitude. Soon after his own parents had died, Nicholas went to the aid of a man in his town who had three daughters, but was too poor to provide dowries for

them. The family's circumstances were so desperate that the father was about to sell his daughters into prostitution. Nicholas went to the man's house at night, when the family was asleep, and threw a bag of gold coins through the window into the father's study. This provided the dowry for the first daughter. Nicholas made two more secret trips to the study window, assuring dowries for the second and third daughters. On his final trip, Nicholas was intercepted by the grateful father who, though sworn to secrecy by Nicholas, revealed the identity of his benefactor.

Bishop Nicholas is also traditionally credited with miraculously restoring to life three children who had been murdered by an innkeeper, as well as saving ships from being wrecked in storms. Sailors in the Aegean Sea bid one another farewell by saying: "May Saint Nicholas hold the tiller." (ibid., p. 506)

Nicholas died on December 6, 352, and was buried in his cathedral. Devotion to this Eastern saint remained so great in Europe that, in 1087, after the city of Myra had fallen into the hands of the Mohammedans, merchants from the Italian city of Bari rescued his relics from Myra and brought them to Bari where a new church was built for them. Pope Urban II came to Bari for their enshrining.

That the paternal care shown by Saint Nicholas for the faithful is returned in filial devotion is evidenced by the consistent veneration of this saint for more than sixteen-hundred years. Some of the incidents from his life may have been embellished through the years, but they all reveal the same unflinching protector of the Faith and the faithful. And the faithful have never forgotten him. He is said to have been represented by Christian artists more often than any other saint except the Blessed Virgin Mary, and his image is found more often than that of any other individual on Byzantine seals. His intercession is continually sought in the Greek as well as the Latin Church. Nicholas is honored as the patron saint of Greece, Germany, Austria, Belgium, many cities in Italy, Limerick in Ireland, and—most especially—Russia.

Saint Nicholas is also the patron of children, sailors, merchants, travelers, pawnbrokers, bakers, and brewers.

The feast day of Saint Nicholas (December 6) is celebrated in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands by giving presents to children. The name "Santa Claus" is a variation of the Dutch translation of his name (Sint Klaes).

Perhaps it is appropriate that his name is associated with the giving of gifts, for Saint Nicholas has given a very great gift to his spiritual children: his example of the defense of the one, true Faith against her ever-present enemies. May we, the recipients of this gift, follow the example he set of implacable opposition to evil in every guise and of swiftly responding to those in need. And, through the intercession of Saint Nicholas, we ask God to strengthen the hearts of those who would defend His Church and to bring to America the graces He brought to Myra. †

The Question Box

Fr. Francis E. Fenton

QUESTION: Some weeks ago a letter was issued by the Vatican permitting, with several limitations, the traditional Latin Mass. Would you have any comments on this? —G.P., Colorado

ANSWER: On October 3, 1984, the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship sent a letter to the presidents of the Conciliar Church's conferences of bishops authorizing restricted use of the traditional Latin Mass. Some traditional Roman Catholics might be misled by it. This should pose no problem at all, of course, since the Conciliar Church is not Catholic anyway. That being the case, what difference does it make what that Church says or does in matters such as the traditional Latin Mass?

Let us suppose, as may happen, that some bishops (is there a Roman Catholic among them?) will avail themselves of this permission and allow the use, which has several limitations, of the traditional Latin Mass in their dioceses. (The Mass, incidentally, to which the Vatican letter refers is not that of Pope Saint Pius V but rather the Roman Missal of Pope John XXIII.) Except "in extraordinary instances," the Mass may not be offered in parish churches. But wherever it is offered it will likely be a place where the Novus Ordo service is also held and, not unlikely, where shenanigans of one kind or another take place as well. It will be offered by Conciliar Church clergymen who also say the "new Mass." Again, some of those Conciliar Church clergymen who may presume to celebrate the traditional Latin Mass will surely be men "ordained" by way of the so-called new rite of ordination (inaugurated in 1968), the very validity of which ordination is doubtful. Do many of the younger clergy of the Conciliar Church even know Latin, much less have a comprehensive knowledge of it?

And so, for such reasons as those noted above, no *informed*, sound traditional Roman Catholic will be swayed in the slightest by the widely publicized Vatican letter of October 3, 1984, regarding the traditional Latin Mass. His convictions relating to the Conciliar Church will remain firm. Even if, in a particular case, a traditional Latin

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"Opus Dei" continued from page 4
comes out of Vatican II and releases the group from accountability to a local bishop (not that that matters much in this day and age), placing it under its own prelate appointed by Rome. In 1982, John Paul made Opus the first Conciliar institute to achieve this autonomous footing.

Will Doctor Roche be able to present his 1,500 case histories to John Paul? Will it make any difference if he does? We wish the professor all the luck in the world but the odds of his making any positive impact are probably less than a basketball team from Antarctica has of beating the USA's Olympic gold medal squad.

In Opus Dei we have a classic example of the post-Conciliar ploy of sounding traditional while simultaneously implementing the "new theology," the same tactic that Opus' benefactor, John Paul II, has worked to near perfection. The power and influence of Opus Dei are such that it should be observed and exposed at every step by responsible Catholics. And this becomes a more urgent task in view of the special relationship Opus Dei enjoys with the pretender pope.†

(Opus Dei is much in the news of late, in large part because of the attention and favored treatment it has received from John Paul II. Mr. Weiskittel has done an excellent job of exposing the sinister character of this highly suspect movement. His article deserves wide circulation. To do our part towards that end, we will reprint it ***if*** *we receive a significant number of requests that we do so. If, then, our newsletter subscribers agree with us that Opus Dei is bad business and that the article should be reprinted, we will proceed to reprint it as soon as possible.—Editor)*

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

The date on the envelope address label indicates the month and year in which the recipient's subscription is due for renewal. At the proper time, a subscription envelope will be enclosed with the newsletter. One may enter a new subscription at any time, of course, and will then receive the eight following newsletter issues.†

A REMINDER

Please remember Christmas gift subscriptions to ***The Athanasian.*** Details were given in the previous issue (October 15, 1984).

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Mass offered under the auspices of the Conciliar Church were valid, he would not attend it. The letter or directive in question changes nothing as far as the stand of authentic traditional Catholicism is concerned. It is but a bone tossed out to us by John Paul II and his Vatican. (Incidentally, one of the signers of that letter is Archbishop Virgilio Noe who, according to a list of names I have and whose authenticity I have no reason to doubt, joined the Freemasons on April 3, 1961).†

Pray
The Rosary
Daily

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